

**IN THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 2, line 18, as follows:

To achieve the above objective, the present invention provides an apparatus for controlling a throttle opening degree, which is an opening degree of a throttle valve of an internal combustion engine mounted on a vehicle. The vehicle has a driving system coupled to an output shaft of the internal combustion engine. The apparatus includes a controller. The controller sets a target value of the throttle opening degree based on a depression degree of an acceleration pedal provided in the vehicle. The controller gradually changes the throttle opening degree at a predetermined gradual change speed such that ~~that~~ the throttle opening degree reaches the target value. A rotation speed of the output shaft changes in accordance with changes in the throttle opening degree. The controller limits the gradual change speed of the throttle opening degree for a predetermined period such that a changing speed of the rotation speed of the output shaft is suppressed at a reverse time when a direction of torque transmitted between the driving system and the output shaft is reversed.